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THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED • A CITIZEN-LED TRANSITION REPORT





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MISSION

Building Community Through Servant Leadership

THEME

Putting People First

VALUES

Customer Service

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Transparency

Accountability



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Special Acknowledgements

Visit www.birminghamal.gov/STRATEGY to download the digital report.

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Letter from Mayor Randall L. Woodfin

Dear Neighbors,

I am honored to be elected to a second term as Mayor of the great City of Birmingham. Serving the city on your behalf is the opportunity of a lifetime.

This publication, *The First 100: A Citizen-Led Transition Report*, represents the collective strength of community-voice, alignment and goals in key areas of my administration.

We are at an inflection point in the City of Birmingham. We are still recovering from the devastating effects of the pandemic on our lives, individually and collectively. At the same time, we are approaching the threshold of The World Games — our City's opportunity to present our best selves as a city, region, and state to the entire world.

Once again, the world is watching Birmingham. Equally important, we are thinking beyond The World Games to *Vision 2025* and all that will be required to honor our commitment to all 99 neighborhoods.

I am thankful to my Transition Team co-chairs, subcommittee leaders, and residents who contributed to this report. You have my commitment to consider every recommendation put forth by the team.

I remain a listening leader. I am eager to hear what you have to say. Together, I believe Birmingham will truly become the best version of itself.

Yours Truly,



Randall L. Woodfin

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Letter from Transition Co-Chairs

Mayor Woodfin,

On behalf of members of our transition team, we are pleased to submit our final report.

We were encouraged by the positive outlook held by so many residents, business owners and other stakeholders across the city.

At the same time, we also found challenges, frustrations and opportunities for much better alignment among and between departments in the City of Birmingham, external partners, and residents.

Mayor Woodfin, there was hardly a single day of your first 100 days in office that did not include some activity from your transition team. Subcommittee leaders, in particular, worked incredibly hard to ensure that residents' voices were heard from every constituent group and every sector represented in *Vision 2025* – your guiding vision for progress in Birmingham.

We offer this report as a new opportunity for residents to re-engage City Hall. While the Woodfin Administration's mission and values remain unchanged, we know this transition presents an opportunity to continue the discussions started in many of the transition team events, surveys and committee meetings.

Birmingham is indeed evolving. From metal to medicine, from industrial innovations to finance and technology, we are embracing our past as fuel for our future. This is understood by a coalition of inter-generational, ethnically-diverse, and intersectional leaders who will help you actualize *Vision 2025*.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and all the residents, business owners and stakeholders of the City of Birmingham.

Sincerely,



Myla Calhoun



Josh Carpenter, Ph.D.



DeJuana Thompson

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Transition Team Subcommittee Leaders



Ashley Moore Samuels
Education & Talent



Anne Rygiel
Neighborhood Housing &
Homelessness



Brian Giattina
Accountable & Efficient
Government



Khadijah Abdullah
Entrepreneurship &
Economic Development



Kathryn Harbert
Arts, Culture &
Entertainment



L. Waymond Jackson Jr.
Education & Talent



Kelleigh Gamble
Neighborhood Housing &
Homelessness



Merrill Stewart Jr.
Accountable & Efficient
Government



Greg Barker
Entrepreneurship &
Economic Development



Eric Essix
Arts, Culture &
Entertainment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been progress in Birmingham.

It is through the transformation of our great city as an industrial powerhouse to medical marvel that we find ourselves with an opportunity to embrace both our near distance past and our imminent present.

The people of Birmingham have often witnessed progress in fits and starts, peaks and valleys through the many transitions of Mayoral administrations. The continuity of the Woodfin Administration offers the City of Birmingham an opportunity to maintain the velocity of positive change our residents deserve.

The Charge

The Mayor recruited more than a dozen community, business, and nonprofit sector leaders. Some of us have worked together for many years. Others met each other for the very first time through this transition effort. There is something powerful about getting people from different sectors together in a room and asking them to solve problems that affect the same persons – you, our residents.

No one is untouched by the issues our team has been charged with addressing and improving. The Mayor asked us to do four things: 1) evaluate our capacity, 2) benchmark best practices, 3) convene stakeholders, and 4) recommend solution.

Evaluate current programs, policies and organizations to determine our city's readiness to achieve Vision 2025 – Mayor Woodfin's aspirational vision for the City of Birmingham.

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We were also asked to benchmark our best efforts against other cities and regions seeking to address comparable challenges. Our research took us throughout the nation to identify best practices, though in many cases our best opportunities to be better are closer than most people might think.

Third, the Mayor asked us to convene stakeholders with common interests, related missions and diverse viewpoints. Some of these convenes were magical – there was immediate insight, passion and partnership to be found. Other convenes were more challenging and inspired tough, honest debate about who we are, where we want to go as a City.

Finally, we were asked to present a set of recommendations rooted in our collective understanding of what residents want and the city's capacity to deliver best-in-class solutions for our people.

Major Themes

Many of the issues our subcommittees faced were different. However, there were some themes that emerged early on and continue through all teams. Two themes dominated our transition efforts; collaboration and infrastructure.

First, every team agreed the City of Birmingham needs better collaboration inside and outside of City Hall. City Hall plays a major role in the quality of life for all residents and businesses. In some case, the city is a direct and single-source service provider. In other cases, the city serves as a neutral and accessible platform around which stakeholders can organize themselves.

The second major theme is the need for better physical and human services infrastructure to support Vision 2025. Most of us have considered essential public infrastructure around neighborhoods, including houses, streets, curbs, sidewalks and main street access. However, the city should give stronger continuation to technological and digital resources as critical infrastructure.

The future of our city depends upon technological and human services resources to ensure that our youngest and eldest generations are prepared for the new trends of the future.

In Conclusion

The Mayor once proclaimed: "The City of Birmingham does not have to be like any other city. We just need to be the best version of ourselves."

We agree. We believe the best version of ourselves is not just an aspirational statement – it is truly possible. The recommendations put forth in this report represent the next tangible steps to bring Vision 2025 to life. Many of our recommendations are specific and represent a natural progression of the work led by Mayor Woodfin and his capable team.

One thing is for certain. Progress for Birmingham will require effort from all of us. We stand ready to support the City of Birmingham, its residents, business owners and visitors.

Sincerely,

The Transition Team

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NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

The affordable Neighborhood Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee (“NHHS”) focused on identifying gaps in Birmingham’s existing infrastructure that, if remedied, would allow every resident to participate fully in a healthy and vibrant community. Our goal was to not only take a deeper dive into workable solutions for those experiencing homelessness and expanding affordable housing, but to build a bridge and streamline the process between the two issues, thereby creating a clear path to housing stability for people who have traditionally been excluded from or inadequately served by existing services and supports. The subcommittee firmly believes in the power of choice and sought to develop a robust strategic plan using a range of pilot project models for broad spectrum coverage of individuals on the precipice of homelessness through families looking for safe, affordable homes in secure and thriving neighborhoods.

GOALS

From its inception, the NHHS sought to design a dynamic living and breathing document focused on achievable small-scale pilot programs. Affordable neighborhood housing and homelessness are two critical issues impacting the whole of the City of Birmingham. Meaningful solutions to address these issues must include mutually invested partnerships between governmental, corporate, and nonprofit entities. It is the NHHS’ reasoned opinion that sustainable change will be unachievable if all sectors do not come together with a unified voice, unwavering support among and between each other, and mutual accountability to ensure the most fundamental of universal human rights: safe and affordable shelter and housing coupled with easily accessible lifesaving interventions for people experiencing homelessness. To create a roadmap for success, the core subcommittee and other community stakeholders developed the following list of goals and objectives that could immediately

effectuate meaningful change for people struggling with housing choice and issues of homelessness:

- To reduce the number of household evictions in high-risk zip codes and neighborhoods while promoting housing stability and neighborhood revitalization.
- To create, design, and implement a safer sleep alternative for people who are currently street homeless and not currently utilizing the existing shelter system.
- To investigate the feasibility of a One Stop service provision center that could bring myriad service providers under one roof, additionally providing a permanent home for the warming station and functioning as a service hub for the homeless community.
- To initiate and integrate wrap-around services specifically focused on mental health crisis responses and homelessness prevention in all current and future programs.
- To ensure sustained fiscal solvency such that sufficient operating dollars are allocated from the City budget as well as leveraging of private partnerships to support new projects without pulling funding from established organizations.
- To build a coalition of neighborhood Churches and Faith Based Communities, Neighborhood Associations, and smaller grassroots organizations that already engage in homeless outreach and support them by providing technical assistance for new or joint funding opportunities, coordinated information and outreach, and creating an opportunity to network with each other in support of residents in their neighborhood(s) of choice.
- To innovate and incentivize methods of affordable neighborhood housing creation and rehabilitation including at the level of city planning.
- To foster the development of catalytic redevelopment agreements to increase production of housing options for profit developers, as well as nonprofit partners.
- To cultivate a private/public consortium for encouraging larger scale development resources.
- To support and implement a tiny home pilot program that would provide more transitional and permanent options for individuals/families experiencing homelessness.

PROCESS

The group met in person on a weekly basis to develop a strategy that would support Mayor Woodfin's Vision 2025 plan and include as many community voices as possible. The core subcommittee developed two subgroups—one for housing and one for homelessness—that met on a weekly basis to complete surveys, gather public feedback, and research best practices for potential pilot projects.

The Homelessness subgroup brought together twelve individuals who are representative of Birmingham's communities' and engage with people experiencing homelessness on a daily basis. From small business owners to direct service providers, the NHHS' goal was to obtain a cross section of stakeholders capable of broad community data collection and development of a spectrum of specific interventions garnering community support. After several meetings spent articulating concerns and identifying barriers, the NHHS chose four projects identified as being most aligned with Vision 2025 and not duplicative of existing services. The pilot projects chosen by majority vote were: One Stop Shop; Safe Sleeping Areas; Neighbors Helping Neighbors; Homelessness Prevention.

Each pilot project consisted of at least three subgroup participants who met multiple times per week to research feasibility, develop community surveys, and identify and address barriers. The collection of community input was crucial to the overall process and, and input was gathered in numerous ways. To gauge interest in services and establish a baseline of satisfaction with existing services, the NHHS designed a paper consumer choice survey distributed to individuals sheltering at Cooperative Downtown Ministries. A total of 56 surveys were completed by shelter guests who identified as "street homeless." To gauge service provider and community support, the subcommittee generated several electronic surveys sent to service providers using email lists and the One Roof Continuum of Care email blast. 179 people received the electronic survey in the targeted email blast. Several of the subgroups chose to hold focus groups or engage in one-on-one interviews with potential partners and stakeholders. Each subgroup submitted a final report to the NHHS as a whole. Once the final reports were submitted, the NHHS co-chairs were able to identify bridges between affordable Neighborhood Housing and

Homelessness and assess the scope of work to ensure that solutions were addressed for the most underserved populations.

BEST PRACTICES

Through its smaller pilot project working groups, the Homelessness subgroup investigated communities successfully rendering services and innovative programming, thereby reducing homelessness through safe, affordable housing. Special attention was paid to mid/large size cities similar in size to Birmingham. The HUB project in Memphis, TN and the Community Care Alliance in Atlanta, GA served as best practice models for Safe Sleep and Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Best Practice organizations, however, were found throughout the United States and Canada, with Austin, TX, standing out as a tiny house model and New Leaf Project in Vancouver, BC demonstrating best practices for direct cash disbursements.

The Affordable Housing subgroup conducted research on the affordable housing consortium with NeighborWorks organizations and municipalities that currently have housing trust funds in their toolbox for affordable housing production and preservation. Understanding the timeline of how long legislation for the passage of a housing trust fund at a local level, the NHHS pulled from research with the city of Pittsburgh, PA. The steps and timeline taken in Pittsburgh started in 2015 with the development of a task force to explore the feasibility of a trust fund, headed up by a member of the City Council. The measure did not pass until December 2016 and funding for the trust did not fully manifest until December 2017. The Regional Housing Trust Fund in Charleston, South Carolina provided some added structure for uses of funding and features leveraging public investment with government bonds, LIHTC, and philanthropic donations. Alabama's state legislative body passed the Alabama Housing Trust Fund in 2012. It is yet to be funded.

The subcommittee reviewed recommendations for development incentives developed by the City of Austin, TX. The City of Austin's Safe, Mixed-Income, Accessible, Reasonably Priced, and Transit Oriented (S.M.A.R.T.) Housing initiative is designed to catalyze affordable housing production for its citizens. Along with Density Bonuses, Austin developed a fee structure matrix aimed at creating affordable units or incentivizing for profit developers

for setting aside a portion of affordable units in a potential development project for LMI families. The subcommittee concluded that having a single point of contact, a "housing czar," to help navigate between departments with the authority to make decisions what fees can be deferred or waived would be important to the recommendation put forward.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a dedicated office and personnel within the Department of Community Development to specifically address homelessness and pursue federal homelessness support resources.

The 2021 Point in Time count established that on any given night, the City of Birmingham has 556 temporarily sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness and 319 unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is a complex issue that is multi-faceted and fluid. There is no quick fix that can be applied to stop the hemorrhaging of hope and human dignity caused by multiple systemic failures. The first step, however, is to bring the crisis to the spot light by providing resources and dedicated personnel that can facilitate the work already being done in the community.

The Woodfin Administration is dedicated to serve all 99 neighborhoods, and it is recognized that each neighborhood has a network of people, faith-based entities, and retail establishments that are doing much of the heavy lifting of supporting its vulnerable residents. The recommendation of the NHHS is that the City of Birmingham, in accordance with

Vision 2025, take the lead by providing dedicated, nonpartisan case workers whose primary focus would include communicating existing resources and developing a mentoring program for smaller agencies so grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, and new organizations can have a seat at the table. The NHHS recognizes that in order for a coalition of individuals, organizations, and institutions to work together there needs to be a central agency dedicated to the City of Birmingham to manage community networks, provide coordination, raise funds, and maintain a directory of services and programs that are available to the homeless population.

Creating a systems-based approach to addressing specific policies that create barriers to reducing homelessness and transitioning away from the more crisis-based approach that has historically informed the City's approach to homelessness.

The City and its partners have developed a comprehensive service network that has worked well for the chronically homeless in Birmingham. However, resources are limited for those on the precipice of homelessness, thus creating a crisis-based cycle that impacts families, neighborhoods, and the fabric of the City. The Homelessness Prevention (HP) Pilot Project is focused on enhancing our existing homeless prevention safety nets while also introducing evidence-based practices to fill in the gaps where current funding and programs are not fully meeting the needs of Birmingham's citizens. Accordingly, the NHHS recommends the following: Keep ESG Homelessness Prevention program as designed through the Continuum of Care and Coordinated Entry System; Start a Direct Cash Disbursement program to address the immediate/urgent needs of citizens in an emergency that could lead to them becoming homeless; Improve Community-based resource development through the Community Development Department's CRR officers. This program has just started and could be built upon with further staff training and coordination with 99 neighborhoods.

Create a centralized facility to provide emergency, maintenance, and social services for homelessness including weather related interventions and feeding sites.

Currently, the City of Birmingham has over 30 homeless providers, and countless citizens that are working every day to support the homeless. Yet, due to geographic spread, limited transportation options, and lack of communication between

service providers, consumer access is lower than desired. The NHHS proposes a physical location that will headquarter onsite staffing dedicated to triaging clients and seamlessly moving them towards their next steps towards self-sufficiency by way of referrals and direct connections with agency partners. A One Stop Shop should provide weather-related emergency shelter, mental & medical assessment, case management services, transportation, storage, and communications and grooming solutions.

While this facility will operate independently it will heavily rely on a collaborative community effort amongst pre-existing agencies and the faith-based community to reach the overall goal of assisting individuals impacted by homelessness. Additionally, the NHHS recommends the addition of a Safe Sleep site. A Safe Sleep site is an area that would provide space for those that are street homeless that do not wish to or cannot engage with the existing homeless shelter system. A Safe Sleep site would include dedicated areas for those living in their cars, space for tent camping, and micro shelters. The site would be low demand with trauma informed design and safety practices. As part of the Magic City Recovery Plan, a special unit of non-Birmingham Police Department officers trained to respond to nonviolent calls for service could be used as crisis response, and the planned site would include a dedicated space for public feedings, sanitation facilities, and offices for volunteers and service providers.

Increasing collaboration and cooperation with the Continuum of Care and area service providers regarding homelessness issues.

Organizations in the City must collaborate more effectively in order to make large scale projects, like the One Stop Shop and Safe Sleeping, successful. According to the NHHS' survey results and community interviews, agencies and service providers are weary of the addition of more projects and are fearful that already limited funding will get reduced to support new programs. Transparency within the City is a concern amongst providers. A constant theme was being "dumped on" and unsupported when dealing with the effects of multiple faulty systems, including hospitals, prisons, and Alabama's mental health network. It is the recommendation of the NHHS that agencies receiving City funding should be audited for efficacy, willingness to participate in times of crisis, and to avoid duplication. The auditing should be clear and not exclude smaller agencies that might not have

“the pull” that larger agencies enjoy as long as they have acceptable accounting practices and the appropriate metrics to measure success.

The Affordable Housing subgroup goals are in line with the previous surveys from the City’s comprehensive, Strategic, and Housing plans. These goals are aimed at creating an environment conducive to the production of the larger goal of 2500 affordable housing units put forward in the 2019-2020 Housing Plan. Considering the need to address affordable units for our neighbors experiencing homelessness our recommendations are as follows:

Identify innovate methods of affordable neighborhood housing production.

Existing production includes traditional single and multifamily construction models. While traditional sticks and bricks have been effective in the affordable housing space for decades, COVID 19 and wage increases behind the inflationary curve in addition to disruptions in the supply chain and elevated costs to build present challenges to affordability in a mixed income housing model. Modular construction, breakdown/reconstruction (i.e., BuildUP), and acquisition/rehabilitation of existing homes are gaining traction in neighboring municipalities and are even being utilized in the neighborhood revitalization space as a method to ensure affordability.

Investigate the feasibility, creation, and funding of a \$10 million dollar local affordable housing trust fund.

Private/public partnerships are at the crux of any sustainable affordable housing effort. Along with CDBG, HOME, ESG funding; resources from the private sector will be key to the ongoing success of a housing trust fund. Similar models have been identified in the Pittsburgh, PA area. Legislatively, there are measures that need to be taken first to lay the foundation for a consortium/housing trust fund. These resources can be available to assist with gap financing, land acquisitions, rehabilitation of existing units for resale, critical repair, and to support down payment assistance programs aimed at offering more housing options for families to rent, transition to homeownership and drive population back into the Birmingham City limits. The City’s allocation of Community Development funding is a useful source, however having partners in the private and philanthropic sector lends to the sustainability of the fund.

Bundle/streamline predevelopment activities & costs to incentivize production of affordable housing units.

In its meetings with for profit and nonprofit development agencies, the NHHS identified that predevelopment activities (i.e., HOV lanes, impact fees, permit fees, and inspection fees) and the costs associated with these required elements are critical to their budgets and timelines for construction. Feedback from the committee and community stakeholders arrived at the same touch point. Having a specific housing staff person within the City, specifically in the Mayor’s Office, that can advocate for projects/builds, navigate the permit/entitlement process, and works (approve fee waivers or deferments, approve plan, assist in title clearing) across departments for priorities identified by Mayor Woodfin, City Council to foster an ecosystem for housing production. As the committee explores the Tiny Home Initiative as a pilot program; the above stated activities will be necessary to meet the movement and needs of our citizens.

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ARTS, CULTURE, AND ENTERTAINMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

The Arts, Culture and Entertainment Subcommittee's ("ACES") primary goal was to advise Mayor Woodfin on ways the City of Birmingham could improve its contribution and commitment to the arts, culture, and entertainment sector. To do this, the ACES formed a focus group that could share ideas on best practices to achieve this goal. Through intentional citizen engagement, this subcommittee sought community input and feedback on programs the City and the Mayor's Office could implement to further support a more inclusive and thriving arts community

GOALS

Our subcommittee was focused on providing recommendations on how Mayor Woodfin and the City of Birmingham could increase visibility, attendance, and publicity in the arts community while helping to make Birmingham a destination city. The ACES' recommendations are based on goals outlined in the Mayor's Vision 2025 plan. These goals include:

Developing ideas on how the City can further support tourism through collaborations with local artists, arts and culture organizations, and entertainment presenters. This was a central focus of ACES discussions with arts community

stakeholders, the Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau, and leaders of Birmingham's arts organizations.

- Identifying how the City can provide support and platforms for lesser known artists and arts organizations.
- Identifying ways the City can disseminate information about upcoming and ongoing events to citizens and potential tourists.
- Supporting and developing educational programs and events that present the arts to the City's youth.

PROCESS

Relying on the thoughts and ideas exchanged in subcommittee meetings, the ACES created an extensive survey that included questions regarding the state of cultural arts in Birmingham. The survey was broadly distributed to a diverse swath of the Birmingham community, including arts organizations, lesser known artists, and officers of Birmingham's 99 neighborhoods. Local news organizations, such as AL.com and CBS42, shared information inviting members of the general public to take part in the survey. Ultimately, the survey was completed by over 500 individuals.

As observed in the ACES survey, when asked "How important is it to you that the city government financially supports arts and cultural activities in Birmingham," given options from "extremely important" to "not at all important," 70% of survey participants felt that it was extremely important that the City of Birmingham continue to offer financial support to the arts community. Survey participants were also asked "Which of the following should be priorities for the City of Birmingham?" and were provided the following options to select from: performing arts (dance, theatre, music), literary arts (readings, poetry competitions, book showcases), visual arts (galleries, exhibitions, film, art showcases, art in public spaces, promoting/marketing art and culture events, providing accessible space for inclusive participation, city tours, outdoor cultural activities, improvement of cultural facilities and infrastructure, and improved transportation options. More than 62% of participants noted that the City should prioritize outdoor cultural activities. Performing arts, art in public places and visual arts rounded out the remaining three of the final top four choices for the survey question.

In addition to the survey, the ACES also gave members of the community who Mayor Woodfin has identified as lesser known artists a chance to share their thoughts and ideas via a virtual "Community Conversation" held on March 2, 2022. This group consisted of independent artists and organizations that make valuable contributions to the Birmingham arts community, but lack the resources to help them present their craft more effectively. Mayor Woodfin and the ACES felt that it was essential that these voices were heard.

The ACES also held a virtual Town Hall meeting on March 7, 2022, which included several focus group members serving as panelists. This event was open to the general public. The subcommittee addressed issues identified by citizens and artists at the March 2nd Community Conversations event and through the disseminated survey. Two repeated themes that were highlighted in community feedback included: (i) a need for funding and support for artists, grassroots efforts, and smaller organizations; and (ii) a central office and/or City-maintained calendar providing regular updates regarding events in Birmingham.

BEST PRACTICES

Throughout the process of obtaining and analyzing data from the survey, Community Conversation and virtual town hall meeting, one commonly communicated concern was the City's lack of a central organization that prioritizes the arts. Those who participated in the information gathering process noted that there is no consolidation and promotion of all the arts (including culinary arts), cultural and entertainment events, and presentations happening in the City. There was a clear consensus that such an organization would help meet Mayor Woodfin's vision for increased tourism, promotion of local artists, and provide equitable support and recognition for all artists and presenters. ACES members and community stakeholders noted that some cities in Alabama, including Montgomery and Huntsville, have either a department of cultural affairs and/or a designated agency that receives city funding to handle cultural arts initiatives.

The Department of Cultural Affairs in Montgomery ("DCA") exists to engage, enlighten, and elevate a diverse inclusive cultural, performing, literary, and visual arts community. The DCA's central focus is to support, promote and advocate for the Montgomery

arts community. Similarly, in Huntsville, the city funds Arts Huntsville, a cultural arts grants program that awards money to non-profit organizations in the city that promote arts programs, productions, and services. Further, Huntsville recently added the newly created position of Music Officer, who will oversee strategic planning initiatives while also supporting the Huntsville's existing music sector. The Music Officer will also identify, implement and increase music-related economic opportunities while being a primary point of contact for local, regional, and national stakeholders. Ultimately, candidates for this position serve as a liaison between government officials and those in the music industry.

Observation and research into Montgomery's and Huntsville's practices noted above served as an integral context through which the ACES' recommendations were identified and framed.

Another observation from the data collected via the community conversations, town hall meeting and survey respondents is a need for a calendar of events and a way to disseminate this information to all stakeholder groups. Through online research, the ACES discovered two of the best cities that have a calendar and or websites that show a centralized place to get updates and information are, Nashville, TN and Austin, Texas.

The marketing of the calendar and website to the public will also be a critical piece in getting public support and awareness. If our citizens and potential visitors don't know that it exists, it cannot be effective. The ACES recommends the City of Birmingham be intentional in its efforts to consistently promote the website or calendar as the central place to get ALL the information you need to find out about arts events in the city. Metrics in place as a part of the website could also measure its effectiveness. Through the sites' analysis, the city would be able to determine the amount of traffic generated and receive concrete data about visitors. A website can also be a way to harvest contact information and provide alerts and updates to individuals who subscribe to it. Encouraging people to subscribe to the site, the OCA and/or City could distribute a brief monthly newsletter that includes highlighted events for any given month. This too can be helpful in letting people know about arts events in the city as well and drive them to the website/ calendar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What is the City doing well that is meeting expectations?

Through conversations with the Birmingham community and an assessment of survey data, this subcommittee found that Birmingham's citizens believe the City has a creative, diverse, and exciting culture arts scene. In addition, citizens noted that the City does a good job of effectively promoting and supporting some of the larger arts entities. Further, community members highlighted that there are several opportunities available for children and families, but many people simply do not know what is available.

What does the City need to start doing?

Based on the research and data obtained by the ACES through engagement with the wider Birmingham community, the following recommendations were identified as integral to the continued growth and development of the City's art, culture, and entertainment scene:

- Establish an Office of Cultural Affairs ("OCA") or similar entity that addresses the needs and concerns of the arts, culture, and entertainment community. Through this organization, create a regularly maintained calendar of events that promotes the arts events happening in the City. Right now, there is not a central organization that supports all arts organizations, and this could be the perfect time for the City to fill that void and leadership.
- Establish connections with the arts community and artists through the OCA that exhibit and encourage collaboration.
- Establish a calendar through the OCA that can be a clearinghouse for arts events and organizations of all sizes that are presenting in the City. An OCA calendar would be a visible accessible medium to sell the best of Birmingham to citizens and tourists. This is the most effective tool for reaching our citizens locally and visitors from all over the world. Based on the input of the wider community, we learned that most of the time people don't think there is anything happening in the City because they don't know what's out there.
- Establish branding that tells the world who we are, what we have been through, where we are going, and how we want to be seen today.
- Improve promotion and marketing of events to a larger and more diverse audience.

- Appoint an entity such as “Create Birmingham” to fill the role of an OCA for the City of Birmingham.
- Utilize the 365 Calendar tool in place but expand to disseminate more information to a wider audience and create an easier process to gather event information.
- Appoint a person from the Mayor’s Office to work directly with Create Birmingham or another such entity to fill the role of an OCA officer.

What does the City need to stop doing?

Birmingham’s stakeholders have expressed a desire to stop having the same conversations around the arts and for the City to implement actual ideas and recommendations that have been made during previous transitions and strategic planning initiatives. In addition, stakeholders would like to see an overall arts organization that doesn’t end at the conclusion of an election cycle. Further, stakeholders and artists felt the city ignored smaller community grass-roots organizations and obscure artists.

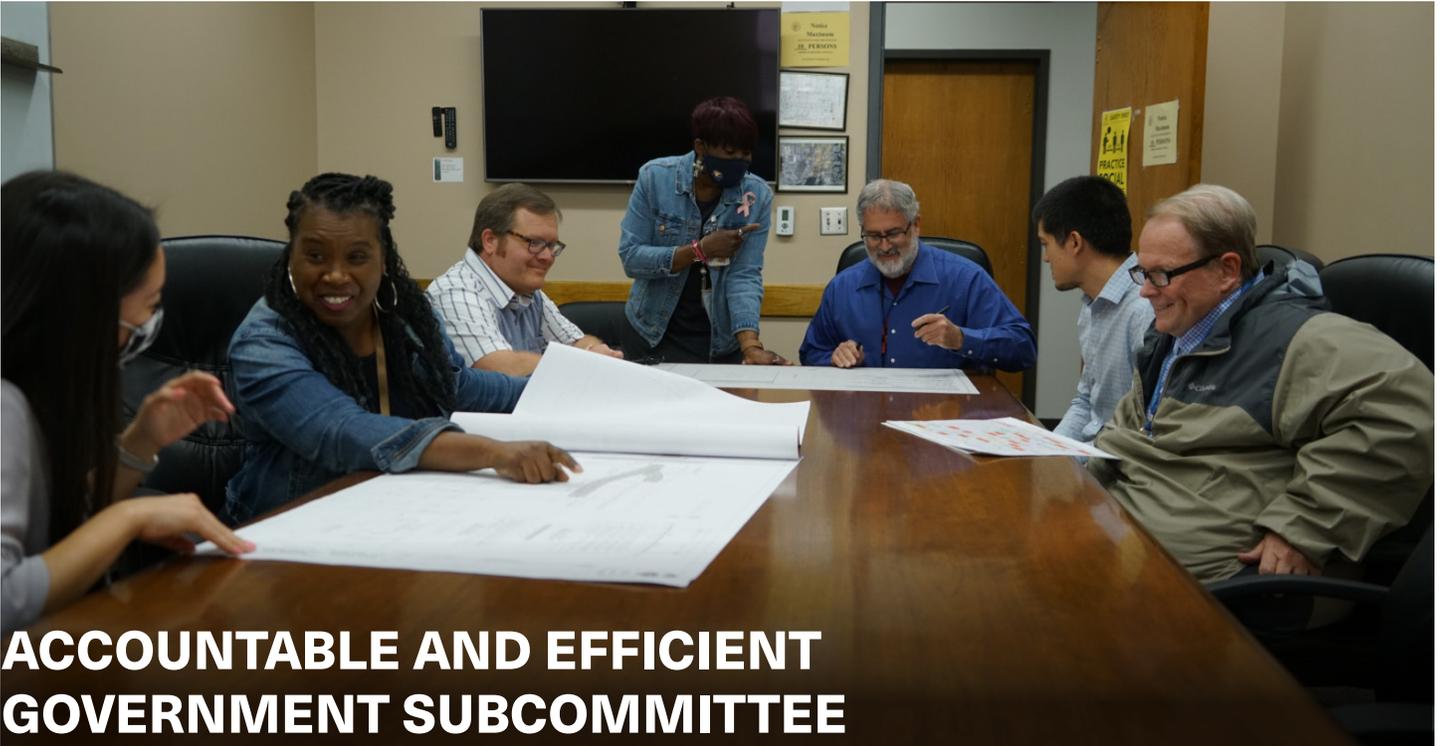
What does the City need to improve?

- Birmingham has great infrastructure in terms of venues. These are the locations where the arts can truly be embraced and presented, especially with a state-of-the-art civic center complex that is still growing. The City, however, has lost big annual events (e.g., City Stages and Sloss Fest) which have historically: (i) bridged racial and economic divides; (ii) encouraged tourism; and (iii) emphasized aspects of our identity as a City.
- Considering the newly renovated Birmingham Jefferson Civic Complex, the City can take the lead on bringing back signature events that tells our story and highlights the things that make Birmingham a destination city. These types of events would provide a boost to annual tourist and related revenue. With time and proper thoughtful management, these signature events can be recognized alongside New Orleans Jazz Fest, Essence Fest, Bonnaroo, etc.

Several stakeholders who completed the survey also pinpointed a need for improvement in security as well as increased parking during events at Downtown venues. This was a common answer when asked to give further input or ideas on accessibility and ways to improve the cultural arts scene in Birmingham.

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ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

In a city the size of Birmingham, overall business operations are complex and interconnected. Our city employs more than 3,000 individuals who operate thousands of vehicles. We maintain miles of city-owned property, and operate hundreds of libraries, police and fire stations, community centers, parks, and other facilities. If you look closely at the structure, each department is linked in some way to several key departments, creating a complex, but strong web.

The Accountable and Efficient Government Subcommittee (“AEGS”) reviewed several critical business processes to identify opportunities for improvements. The focus was on areas where we could see the implementation of projects or tasks that would yield immediate outcomes as well as areas that are critical to the long-term performance of the city.

We chose to target departments with a high volume of transactions, significant contact with our constituents, and critical data that has a major impact on our financial strength:

- Planning, Engineering, and Permits (PEP)
- Human Resources (HR) and Talent Recruitment
- Information Management Systems Support (IMS)

After conducting interviews with internal and external stakeholders, we discovered that significant gaps in staffing, technology, and business processes have negatively impacted various customer service deliverables and increased staff workloads. The struggle to recruit and retain qualified talent was a theme across all departments.

GOALS

The AEGS focused on identifying transformative solutions that would lead to improvements in business continuity and sustained long-term

performance. It was important for the team to identify issues that could be assessed, addressed, and implemented in the near future. Our goals included:

- Finding inefficiencies or gaps that hurt business performance.
- Identifying leading business processes and supporting technologies for consideration.
- Providing a list of business improvement recommendations for review.

PROCESS

In preparation for the assessment, the AEGS reviewed the Mayor's Vision 2025 plan and previous transition committee documents to focus on areas of improvement. Specifically, the departments of PEP, HR, and IMS. The team reviewed department focuses with City leadership and confirmed them as needed areas for improvement. The AEGS then utilized industry benchmarks, customer interviews, and employee interviews to assess these areas.

The AEGS performed benchmarks of the city's business processes and technology solutions against UAB, surrounding municipalities, and private organizations that support similar functioning organizations.

*It is important to note that the current software being used in the Finance Department will no longer be serviced by the provider and must be updated by 2024. This is a major project, which the Mayor must recognize, and work with the Finance Department to provide the needed resources for implementation. This will require extensive planning, funding, and leadership allocation.

BEST PRACTICES

AEGS believes in the conventional approach that reinvention of the wheel only produces duplication. We found it extremely important to hear recommendations from our key leaders before moving forward. Upon completing internal and external stakeholder interviews, we found team members eager to share their vision, best practices, and a path to improved business systems and technological updates. AEGS collected and analyzed the data and recommendations from those interviews and agreed upon the following.

First, the Department of Planning Engineering and

Permits must refine its business processes and supporting technology. We recommend that PEP works to model its technological updates after municipalities with similar business processes. Fairfax County, VA, and Santa Clara, CA both have robust online permitting systems with customer-focused navigation tools. These tools would bridge major gaps in PEP systems and help to modernize their business processes.

Next, we recommend that the City explore creative ways to enhance its employee recruitment efforts. Modules such as the Baltimore Corps, designed to leverage their network and experience in recruiting top talent, help organizations fulfill their hiring needs. Engaging an operation of this magnitude would create a talent pipeline that could be used to hire and fulfill department specific needs. We also recommend that Birmingham consider modeling its website after the City of Memphis. Their website is inviting, attractive, and captures the tone of their organization by highlighting its core values, mission, and available positions. We believe that it's the City of Birmingham's job to tell its story and share its values, not the full responsibility of the Jefferson County Personnel Board. Updating our website would help to make the City more appealing when recruiting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City is a large, complex organization, and there is not a magic wand to fix all of our processes. However, this subcommittee agreed that many of these systems, policies, and procedures could be improved if the City made them a priority and allocated funding.

The AEGS committee is aware that funding is limited, however, we are confident a commitment to these areas will produce a fast, measurable return on the investment. Reducing the amount of time employees spend on redundant tasks will open up time for tasks that are a value-add for the City. This will improve morale. We believe the most critical improvement will be in the quality of data and the timeliness of data sharing between the executive team and the department heads, allowing them to make more informed decisions based on current and accurate data.

Planning, Engineering, & Permits (PEP)

For decades the PEP Department, has been an ongoing frustration for its customers, which include residents, architects, contractors, developers, and the corporate community. Vague, confusing, and

complex policies and procedures are the source. The PEP has worked to reorganize the department with a goal of helping customers understand the processes. They have streamlined some tasks and put a focus on regular communication with customers.

The Director of PEP, Katrina Thomas, is in the process of implementing a technology upgrade that should resolve most of the technological gaps that exist in the department. Director Thomas presented the AEGS with a detailed list of tasks with her target deadlines to implement many of these upgrades. The AEGS believes that Director Thomas' plan is achievable, but based on the current workload of the staff, and significant amount of work required to document and redefine the PEP policies and procedure, it will be difficult or impossible to achieve by her deadline. Additional support is needed to complete the overhaul.

The AEGS recommends providing short-term or contract labor staffing resources and funding to assist PEP with completing all of the planned improvements and upgrades to the PEP systems. If the projects are supported, upgrades and system processes could support an implementation period within 18 months. Below are our specific proposed recommendations:

- Deploy Electronic Plan Submittal Services. This would allow contractors to submit plans electronically, which would eliminate the need for customers of PEP to print and physically deliver plans. The system should also increase the efficiencies for plan reviewers, inspectors, and others to access the information and provide electronic feedback to the customer and to other members of the team.
- Implement Camion Online permitting guide to provide a digital checklist for navigating permitting, zoning, and license processes for new businesses.
- Establish Planning Ambassadors to provide one-on-one sessions or workshops with small business owners to help navigate the permitting process.

Human Resource (HR) Department

Mayor Woodfin has a clear goal: Create a work force of happy employees who are providing fast and efficient services to the city's businesses and residents. This comes with a few challenges.

While performing interviews with department leaders, a central theme surfaced regarding the inability to recruit qualified talent to meet organizational needs. Many key city employees who had a depth of institutional knowledge have retired in the last few years. The City has struggled to replace them with best-in-class employees who are in it for the long haul. We hope to offer practical suggestions for improvement.

A. Part One: General Human Resources Process Improvements

The current demand of employee needs has strained the effectiveness of the Human Resources Department. The increased demand has resulted in high workloads and sometimes inefficient use of staff. The following is the proposed recommendation for the HR Department:

- Implement a comprehensive upgrade to all the IT systems used in HR. Currently, HR has five separate software programs for Human Resources, Payroll, Employee Benefits Management, Pension, and Time Tracking Software. In general, these IT systems do not feed directly to the main accounting system software and very rarely do the programs share data between each other. This is leading to a huge amount of duplicative data, which opens the door for errors in employees' pay, pension contributions, and benefits. A comprehensive upgrade to the most critical programs will streamline processes and allow some of HR staff to focus on employee services and benefits education. The AEGS believes the most efficient way to address this is to engage an independent consultant to assess current systems, policies, and procedures and to recommend an analysis of technology solutions that will meet the city's growing needs. In addition, the HR IT systems must be fully integrated with the finance department's upgrade of their new accounting system.
- Implement Employee Self-Service System. A self-service system allows employees to handle simple transactions such as: reviewing health benefit elections, retrieving copies of paystubs, and reviewing retirement/pension benefits.
- Provide Total Reward Statements, as employee pension benefits are not easily calculated and distributed. It takes multiple departments and multiple teams to provide general information to employees.

- Establish an Employment Engagement Committee to support efforts so our employees' issues can be heard and addressed by the administration.

B. Part Two: Talent Recruitment

While the City maintains a partnership with the Jefferson County Personnel Board (JCPB), additional support is needed in recruitment services for open positions at the city. During stakeholder interviews, multiple leaders shared issues with not receiving the best, most qualified candidates for their open positions. The AEGS believes that one explanation is the decline in younger candidates applying to work in government jobs, plus the reality of the difficulty of being hired by the City. While the JCPB is equipped to support employee growth, candidate vetting, and employee training, we believe that our recruiting efforts do not match our changing environment. Below are the proposed recommendations for talent recruitment:

- Develop a Birmingham City Career Opportunity Website to highlight core values, mission, and position availability, better communicating and promoting the city's identity.
- Partner with Birmingham Corps to develop a talent pipeline for better transition and onboarding.

Information Management Systems (IMS)

A review of IMS revealed that the department's challenges with filling vacant positions and outdated technology platforms have affected its ability to effectively support the City of Birmingham's business units. It has placed a strain on existing staff and resulted in many departments securing their own individual IT liaisons. Below are the proposed recommendations for IMS:

- Modernize the City of Birmingham's Technology: Exploring technical applications that can offer shared services for Human Resources, the Finance Department, the Office of the City Attorney, and the Mayor's Office. Also, we recommend implementing Line of Business Systems for Public Safety and Public works. This improvement will allow systems to talk to each other and permit work to flow seamlessly across departments, enhancing citywide standards, tools, and performance metrics.
- Centralize IMS Organization: The City of Birmingham operates a series of digital islands.

They were created based on the unique technology needs of various departments over the years. However, managing so many systems strains our short-staffed IMS team. We recommend creating a Hybrid Information Technology organization staffed to support individual department operations which allows us to leverage professional services for specialized skills and expertise.

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EDUCATION AND TALENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

Focusing on our youngest constituents, the Education and Talent Subcommittee ("ETS") was tasked with birth through entry into the workforce. The subcommittee approached this work with the understanding that these two components are at the heart of opportunity for Birmingham's citizens. Information was gathered from educators, parents, employees, and employers to create a well-rounded picture of the current state of education and talent across the City. Our recommendations are the culmination of several subcommittee discussions as well as various opportunities for the public to give feedback and suggestions.

GOALS

The goals of the ETS were to support Mayor Woodfin in refining his Vision 2025 plan for progress in all 99 neighborhoods with a specific focus on education and workforce entry. To achieve this goal, the subcommittee was tasked with assessing the current state of education and talent within the City of Birmingham. The goals were as follows:

- Developing an understanding of the current educational structures of Birth-5 and Kindergarten-12th grade to better plan for future success.
- Generating ideas for extending existing programming opportunities for youth

and investigating opportunities to gain additional resources to support programming opportunities.

- Extending existing recommendations for wraparound services to include broadband infrastructure access for students.
- Identifying specific recommendations for workforce development to assist with ensuring that citizens have access to sustainable living wages, and competitive salaries and benefits.

The subcommittee co-chairs met formally and informally to sync the direction of the committee. These goals drove the direction of the subcommittee throughout the information-gathering process.

PROCESS

The ETS began by meeting with a host of diverse constituents virtually to discuss the current state of education and talent within the City. Through initial discussions, it was determined that the subcommittee should be divided into several subgroups:

- Birth-5
- K-12 Education
- Post-secondary Education
- Workforce Development and Talent

The ETS met weekly to discuss the current state of education and workforce entry in the City of Birmingham. Suggestions for improvements to education and workforce entry were also made the topic of discussion. Subcommittee members provided insight based on their personal and professional perspectives and experiences. Throughout subcommittee discussions, expectations and alignment to Vision 2025 were woven in to ensure consistent alignment.

A smaller committee of seven members met to craft survey questions. This small group included members from the ETS subgroups. The subcommittee took intentional steps to ensure that the survey questions were easy to understand and that the survey was relatively succinct. The ultimate goal of this effort was to secure as many responses as possible, leading to a representative sampling of the citizens of Birmingham.

In addition to the survey, a virtual town hall was held on Tuesday, February 22, 2022. Mayor Woodfin gave greetings and explained the goal of the ETS. Participants then went to breakout rooms to discuss

concerns and offer feedback on their selected area. The discussions were guided by the following questions used to assess initiatives, policies, and programs advanced by the City of Birmingham and the Mayor's Office:

- What are we doing well?
- What do we need to start doing?
- What do we need to stop doing?
- What are we doing well but needs improvement?

The February 22, 2022 virtual town hall provided an opportunity for citizens to provide real-time feedback and offer suggestions for improvement. Participants praised the ETS for giving citizens a voice.

To break down the data, two ETS members read the survey and town hall responses. These responses were read multiple times. The first reading was done individually to get a layout of the responses. The second reading was together in order to set the standard of understanding. The final reading was done individually to record responses. This means there were two sets of individual reading data to merge. With the final reading, similar responses were grouped together in order to find common themes. Because of the second reading (done together), the number of responses generally aligned between the two readers. In the few instances where the two readers had more than a difference of two (i.e., one reader recorded 4 instances of "more community engagement" and the other reader recorded 6 instances for the same category), the two readers would sit together again to discuss how they arrived at their answer. After re-reading those specific responses, the readers count again until they can come to the difference of less than two. Once the scoring process was completed, a team of two members drafted a written report.

BEST PRACTICES

As an initial exercise, the ETS reviewed the 2018 Woodfin Way Transition Team recommendations (the "Woodfin Way") to locate where desired outcomes were realized and identify barriers to execution. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 severely impacted the original set of recommendations outlined in the Woodfin Way. This was apparent on a larger scale as our nation and city refocused their energy, time, and resources to mitigate the pandemic's impact on our families, schools, and businesses. In consideration of our historic successes and shortcomings, the ETS sought to better understand how other geographically

proximate and similar sized cities were responding to the challenges and gaps in workforce and education while also paying close attention to what local economists and experts (i.e. Brookings Institute, Opportunity Insights, etc.) suggest are critical ways to improving the economic mobility of urban cities through targeted workforce development and education strategies.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

- The ETS recommends continuing to solicit feedback from a broad and diverse set of stakeholders by keeping this survey tool open, synthesizing feedback, and devising plans and strategies to continue responding to emergent community education and workforce assets and needs. This recommendation is derived from town hall comments thanking the committee for the opportunity to share ideas and give feedback. Additionally, while the subcommittee worked tirelessly, there is still a need to continue capturing responses in order to create a more complete picture of the needs of citizens.
- The ETS also recommends continuing to strengthen the relationship between the Mayor's Office and the Birmingham City Schools system. There are still many opportunities for support and collaboration between the two organizations and the ETS would recommend continuing to formalize this relationship to work together, support each other, and ensure every child in Birmingham is prepared for college, career, and a successful productive life. The City of Birmingham's Department of Youth Services is currently serving in the role and assists with communication, collaboration, and support.
- Contract with a proven evaluation partner (i.e. UAB or other proven partners) to assess and evaluate existing education and workforce development initiatives and provide recommendations for scaling and/or replicating successful models and building capacity. Both survey and town hall feedback indicate that citizens would like to know more about existing programs that are available to citizens. Assessing current programming will assist with making sure that citizens are aware of opportunities that are available.

Birth-5 and K-12

- Establish a shared priority around developing and delivering early childhood centers across the Birmingham City Schools and clarify a plan for marketing and connecting early learning opportunities to families and educating parents on available subsidies and supports (i.e. transportation, etc.) to ensure their young learners get access to high-quality early education.
- Launch and fully support Page Pals Reading Initiative Program to support the State of Alabama's Literacy Act. In 2019, the Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) was signed into law to ensure that public school students are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.
- Support all early childhood centers in targeted neighborhoods to improve quality where gaps exist by providing access to necessary funding supports and establishing vehicles and structures (professional learning collaboratives) for continuous learning and improvement. During town hall discussions it was determined that the City of Birmingham is doing well with early childhood education, however, additional opportunities are needed to accommodate the numbers of students within the city.
- Identify a partner to train and support naturally existing care providers and mixed-delivery models inclusive of home-based providers, licensed family childcare providers, centers, and family, friends, and neighbor caregivers. This recommendation supports a wide range of educational models.
- Evaluate the impact of current mental health support intervention in Birmingham City Schools and determine a sustainability plan. Through support from the city, The Birmingham Coalition for Students Mental Health is working to support Birmingham City Schools with students' mental health concerns. Additional measures are needed to further support the needs of students long-term.
- Continue enlisting and attracting Birmingham City School students to take advantage of internships and available scholarship supports via the Birmingham Promise, a highly successful Birmingham initiative that began as a result of previous recommendations.

Workforce and Talent Retention

- Similar to the recommendations outlined in the birth-to-five and K-12 supports, the ETS recommends that the City conduct a landscape analysis to identify existing high-quality workforce development strategies and partner capacity, map quality to demographics to ensure equitable access, identify gaps in service, and develop a plan to improve quality in targeted regions across Birmingham. Survey data identified a strong desire for the city to increase opportunities in the tech field as well as boot camps and on-the-job training programs to ensure that applicants are qualified for their desired job.
- Expand and improve access to adult training and education programs aimed at providing credentials, certificates, and re-skilling and upskilling residents to eliminate the emerging workforce gap in emerging industries (i.e. technology) and strengthen the pipeline for employment. The recommendation reflects that 86% of responses indicated a desire to earn technology and coding credentials for themselves and/or their families. Additionally, 72% of survey participants felt they did not have the skills, training, or resources (internet, technology devices) necessary to obtain quality jobs.
- Continue exploring incentive programs to encourage graduating students to stay in the City of Birmingham. Survey feedback indicated a need for more efficient local college partnerships for city-wide initiatives.

Wrap-Around Services

- Continue exploring a partnership with the Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) Program to expand the availability of the program to students who are behind grade level. SAIL is an existing nonprofit within the city that currently offers summer programming for select Birmingham City Schools as well as the Black Belt and North Alabama. Expanding this program to more schools continues the recommendation that was given during the previous transition committee's report.

- Similar to the work being done at Harlem' Children's Zone in Harlem, New York, allowing the City's Division of Youth Services to serve as lead agency in partnership with Birmingham City Schools, in delivering effective and successful wrap-around services.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

The Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Subcommittee (“EEDS”) worked on developing a shared vision and collaborative processes among the economic development organizations and the small business council to realize targeted growth while serving all citizens in Birmingham. Our city is an engagement-rich environment, where there are several entities and organizations focused on economic and business growth across the city of Birmingham. Given this, our goal was to build on the insights of the 2018 Transition Committee’s report while also developing an understanding of the current assets, and opportunities across our city to develop an aligned and inclusive vision, agreed-upon goals, and metrics that ultimately cultivate a thriving and equitable economic ecosystem that mutually benefits every citizen in our beloved community over the next 3-5 years. To do this, EEDS leveraged a myriad of engagements such as a joint community survey with the Education and Talent

subcommittee to understand what Birmingham citizens want from a “quality job”, how they define “quality jobs”, the barriers to achieving quality jobs, and their hopes and advice for how to support residents in accessing quality jobs. Additionally, the subcommittee engaged in community meetings with the existing economic development entities, and one on one discussions with the small business community to inform our insights and recommended path forward.

GOALS

Our goal was to leverage Mayor Woodfin’s 2025 plan and metrics as a foundation to build a path forward. In our approach, the subcommittee collectively agreed it was paramount for our community to develop a comprehensive vision, goals, and defined set of metrics to make any collective progress. This task required a shared understanding of the existing goals of organizations while simultaneously

leveraging these goals to build a plan to create shared definitions and metrics that ultimately would set a standard threshold for inclusive economic growth in Birmingham.

We sought out to define the following metrics:

- Grow the number of new quality jobs over the next 5 years
- Job retention
- Cultivation of new capital investment
- Support through investments in targeted business start-ups
- Identify and support an increase in quality jobs for women and people of color
- Design pathway for credentialing citizens to create a pathway to quality jobs

Note: There will likely be additional metrics added to this list throughout the year.

PROCESS

- EEDS agreed that to create a strong plan, we needed to build a more robust plan to ensure our path forward was both inclusive and equitable.
- The EEDS and the core subcommittee worked in partnership with the mayor's office, existing economic development organizations, members of the small business council, and leveraged data from the Workforce and Talent Subcommittee survey to develop an initial vision for economic growth in Birmingham
- The EEDS core subcommittee included the following economic development entities: Alabama Power, Birmingham Business Alliance, EDPA, Innovation Depot, Prosper, Regions, REV, Shipt, Southern Research, Tech Birmingham, UAB, Urban Impact, and the City of Birmingham's Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity
- These entities met monthly and engaged in ongoing communications between meetings in order to maintain momentum
- From January through March the economic development organizations met to align and build a plan to:
 - Create a shared aspirational community vision for economic growth.
 - Develop an understanding of existing organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and the goals of each entity and how they impact the metrics outlined by the Mayor's office.
 - Identify duplication or service/strategy gaps

in our economic development processes.

- Identify the types of business sectors we want to develop, grow, and or attract to Birmingham to create a competitive advantage for our community.
- In our first meeting, we assessed existing economic development organizations present and invited other organizations to join future meetings to ensure that we had the right mixture of voices at the table.
- In between our January and February meeting, organizations were asked to complete a spreadsheet to share their specific organization's goals and metrics to identify where alignment already existed.
- During our February meeting, the core subcommittee engaged in rigorous discussions around the meaning of the metrics set forth by our mayor and discussed whether we needed to add any additional metrics.
- We leveraged research, data, and reports such as the MIT Living Wage Calculator, Brookings Institute's research, the Accelerate-Alabama 2.0 report, the 2021 Minneapolis-St. Paul Regional Indicator Dashboard, and sought counsel from the City of Birmingham's Office of Innovation to better understand available assessment tools as we worked to define the metrics and identify sectors
- Additionally, given the alignment of education and talent subcommittee goals, we partnered with the Education and Talent subcommittee to participate in a workforce survey to develop an understanding of the hopes, aspirations, and needs of our community members (which includes our students and parents) and what they desire to see in a quality job and the types of barriers and challenges that they believe exist that hold them back. Fifty-four residents responded to the survey.
- The overwhelming response from respondents was that Birmingham residents desire quality jobs, low-cost training to prepare them, and a "living wage" in order to participate in our economy.
- Some key questions that were insightful from the survey are the following:
 - Specifically, when asked whether they have access to a quality job, only 18% of survey respondents believe they currently have access to a quality job.
 - When asked the open-ended question: "What types of jobs would you want yourself or your family to have access to?"

- 38% of respondents shared that they desire tech or tech-related jobs and training to prepare them for the roles
- Nearly 20% of respondents specifically used the words “living wage,” “not living paycheck to paycheck,” or “higher pay with benefits,” in reference to the types of jobs they would like their families to have access to in Birmingham
- Respondents were also asked, “What barriers do you think exist in obtaining a quality job that needs to be addressed?” 72% shared that the barriers were a combination of 1) not knowing what jobs exist, 2) not having reliable transportation, and 3) not having the skills, training, and minimal resources such as internet or credentials to perform the job.
- When asked in a “check all that apply” question on specifically what type of training they desired to skill-up our community, 86% of respondents shared technology and coding credentialing; 60% named financial credentialing, 58% shared medical credentials, and 44% named welding and advanced manufacturing as their top categories.
- Further, respondents shared that one way the city can support them in obtaining quality jobs is by providing training programs that are free or minimally affordable and ensuring the programs are widely advertised.
- Leveraging all the insights, the core subcommittee landed on a draft aspirational and operational visions that felt both rigorous, inclusive, equitable, and representative of our community at large:
 - Aspirational Vision: “We are the Southeast’s leader in quality job creation, preparation, and access. We tear down barriers and kick open doors so that nobody is left out. We grow, recruit, and support the diverse set of businesses and innovators that will propel our economy”
 - Operational Vision: “We are collaborating to build trust, to set and efficiently achieve a common vision and goals for inclusive economic growth, to hold ourselves accountable to each other and our community on our progress, and to celebrate wins, admit and grow from setbacks, and stick together for as long as it takes to achieve our vision of an economy that works for everyone.”
- Finally, recognizing the significance of this work, the core subcommittee outlined a roadmap of objectives to execute over the next nine months to ensure we continue to build momentum while being collaborative over the next 9 months.
- The roadmap includes a process for aligning on a vision, setting metrics, goals, and priorities, and vetting this across a broader constituency of community members over the next 9 months to ensure we build an equitable vision.
- The following are the objectives for the next 9 months:
 - Outline FY22 work goals and objectives,
 - Leverage research to define “quality job” and “inclusive economic growth” (in progress)
 - Align on key metrics (in progress)
 - Identify target business growth sectors to cultivate or add to our community
 - Map out each target business growth sector by metrics and vet with other key stakeholders across the community to ensure the broader community see a path for how the strategies create opportunities for them and their families
 - Finalize goals and strategies, and roles for organizations in achieving goals
 - Create a dashboard to transparently measure progress
 - Create a communication plan to keep the community up to date on progress
 - Ensure goals are embedded in organizational goals for participating members and organizations
- The subcommittee has committed to develop, adopt, and monitor key metrics/measures for all strategies on an ongoing basis

BEST PRACTICES

- Economic Development-Related Public and Private Partnerships. The City has a strong working relationship with other public entities and private sector leaders that will enable the types of targeted economic development growth Birmingham citizens deserve. These partnerships will be critical to implementing the ultimate recommendations from this core subcommittee.
- A “people-centered” approach. The City is focused on supporting all Birmingham citizens. This focus will be critical when recommendations are made to help prepare Birmingham citizens to fill high-growth jobs and careers, while also equitably supporting

founders of start-ups and small business owners to sustain and grow their businesses.

- A fiscally-responsible approach to business support and incentives. The City's recent history confirms the City's commitment to supporting growth with companies through various support programs and incentives that help enable the company's growth, while also generating the type of economic return Birmingham citizens should expect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations include next steps and preliminary recommendations, as the subcommittee has agreed that their work must continue throughout 2022 to execute the goals outlined above.

Next Steps

Partner with an external consultant to create an Economic Development Dashboard that will:

- track the City's overall economic health.
- transparently include metrics to measure/track the effectiveness of our economic development strategies and tactics on the City's economic development priorities.

Develop a strategic plan that outlines

- What we want to accomplish around Targeted Business Sectors the City will proactively pursue.
- How we will accomplish the City's proactive economic development strategies, including:
 - Alignment among Birmingham area economic development organizations and small business community to:
 - Pursue targeted innovation and provide entrepreneurial support
 - Proactively identify and address challenges and opportunities facing existing businesses
 - Pursue growth by executing a targeted business attraction strategy.
 - Alignment between Birmingham area economic development organizations, the small business community, and other community allies to ensure:
 - Coordinated efforts to prepare all Birmingham citizens for sustainable careers.
 - Coordinated efforts to ensure Birmingham has the needed physical

infrastructure for growing companies. (ex. Roads, airport, fiber, water, transportation, etc.)

- Coordinated efforts to ensure Birmingham's "place-making" strategies are developing the type of resources to attract, support, and retain businesses

Recommendations

Keep

- **Stay Engaged.** Throughout this process, having the Mayor's office's participation, counsel, and resources has been beneficial to the momentum of the core subcommittee's work. We recommend that the City of Birmingham stay in close communication with both the small business and economic development organizations minimally quarterly to stay apprised of their goals objectives and share places where the city and the entities can align and share resources
 - **Deploy Resources in Alignment with Identified Metrics and Goals.** Given the focus on the alignment of goals, the subcommittee also believes it is important for the city to deploy its resources in aligned ways. As such, we recommend the City of Birmingham share updates and prioritize recruitment of new businesses and the cultivation of existing businesses that have a specific focus on the identified metrics.

Start

- Ensure Birmingham area economic development organizations are aligned and establish a coordinated approach to creating quality jobs for Birmingham citizens.
- Ensuring all regional and state economic development allies know the primary growth targets and sectors for the city.
- Our definition of job quality must be rooted in mobility. It is not enough to place talent into high-paying, in-demand industries. How talent progresses through our pipelines is essential to our regional growth and talent succession plan. We recommend the city invest in measuring these investments, particularly wage growth and retention.
- Set a local wage threshold but understand individual and household needs. As observed in the MIT tool and other living wage calculators, a sustaining wage will vary by household. A

single mother with at least one child living in the household will have a completely different sustainable wage figure than a single individual with no dependents. This is significant for our city, as we recently shared that 19,554 of Birmingham's 34,407 households with children are helmed by a single woman. While household composition contributes to the unique financial need of individuals and families, research shows that even a single individual will continue to struggle economically making \$16/hour.

- Invest in developing a formal pipeline system. Workers who have traditionally held low-wage jobs simply churn from one poor-quality job to another. By mapping a formal pipeline for Birmingham's emerging and established industries, as a collective, we can match talent to opportunities while linking historically underserved populations, like women and Black people, to resource and wrap-around services. This process should include employer and training provider buy-in but remain grounded in the voice and lived experiences of job seekers.
- Create an accessibility plan for small businesses. Small businesses are eager to grow and share their services across our city; however, need a small business directory to support them in both advertising their services and finding one another to support business growth and collaboration. Additionally, to ensure the plan is inclusive and equitable we recommend implementing a small business needs survey to understand ways to better support business owners and start-up businesses in navigating the process of starting and sustaining as a business.

Improve

- Attract, cultivate and support entrepreneurs and sectors that Improve our City. Focus on the development and attraction of technology-related companies to provide quality, sustainable jobs/careers for Birmingham citizens. Focus on supporting emerging entrepreneurs of neighborhood lifestyle companies that provide quality jobs and meaningful services for Birmingham citizens. Identify and pursue supply chain opportunities in the Birmingham area that create opportunities for quality job growth for Birmingham citizens.
- Improve services and training programs to prepare our workforce. Ensure the needed support services are aligned with the City's economic development targeted business

growth sectors. This includes workforce training programs; physical infrastructure investments; and financial incentive/support programs.

- Improve government function and support of small businesses. Small businesses face several hurdles when onboarding, and navigating City Hall, thus, creating a "how-to" guide can support small businesses in understanding the step-by-step process and how it varies based on "product-based" versus service-based businesses may struggle to navigate. Further, accessibility and communication were barriers that were raised in the small business community, one recommendation to ensure equitable and wide dissemination of information is to engage neighborhood presidents to ensure their respective communities can access accurate and up to date information

Stop

- Reduce silos and encourage and incentivize collaboration. When subcommittee entities shared their annual goals and priorities, there were numerous distinct and similar priorities. In the spirit of alignment and creating an inclusive and equitable economic ecosystem, this variation, while helpful at times, creates duplication and silos in the system. Given the named focus on the key metrics, goals above, we recommend that these entities continue to work together and share their updated goals and progress quarterly and annually with the city to ensure alignment. Birmingham is a richly-engaged community and has several entities working on economic development. This has created misalignment and silos. We recommend the city either slow or minimize the creation of new economic development organizations unless there is a new or existing need that is not currently being addressed by an existing organization.

Acknowledgements

Our Transition Team effort has been driven by a handful of staff and key volunteers that served as connectors, recruiters, and advocates for issues that matter most to the citizens of Birmingham.

Thank you for your tremendous commitment to the City of Birmingham and for your support of The Woodfin Administration.

Honorary Co-Chairs Support Team

Amanda Lee, Executive Secretary, Alabama Power Company
Denzel Okinedo, Attorney, Burr & Forman, LLP
L. Blair Sullens, Community Development Specialist, Alabama Power Company
Anne Marie Verchot, Senior Executive Assistant to the CEO, Southern Research

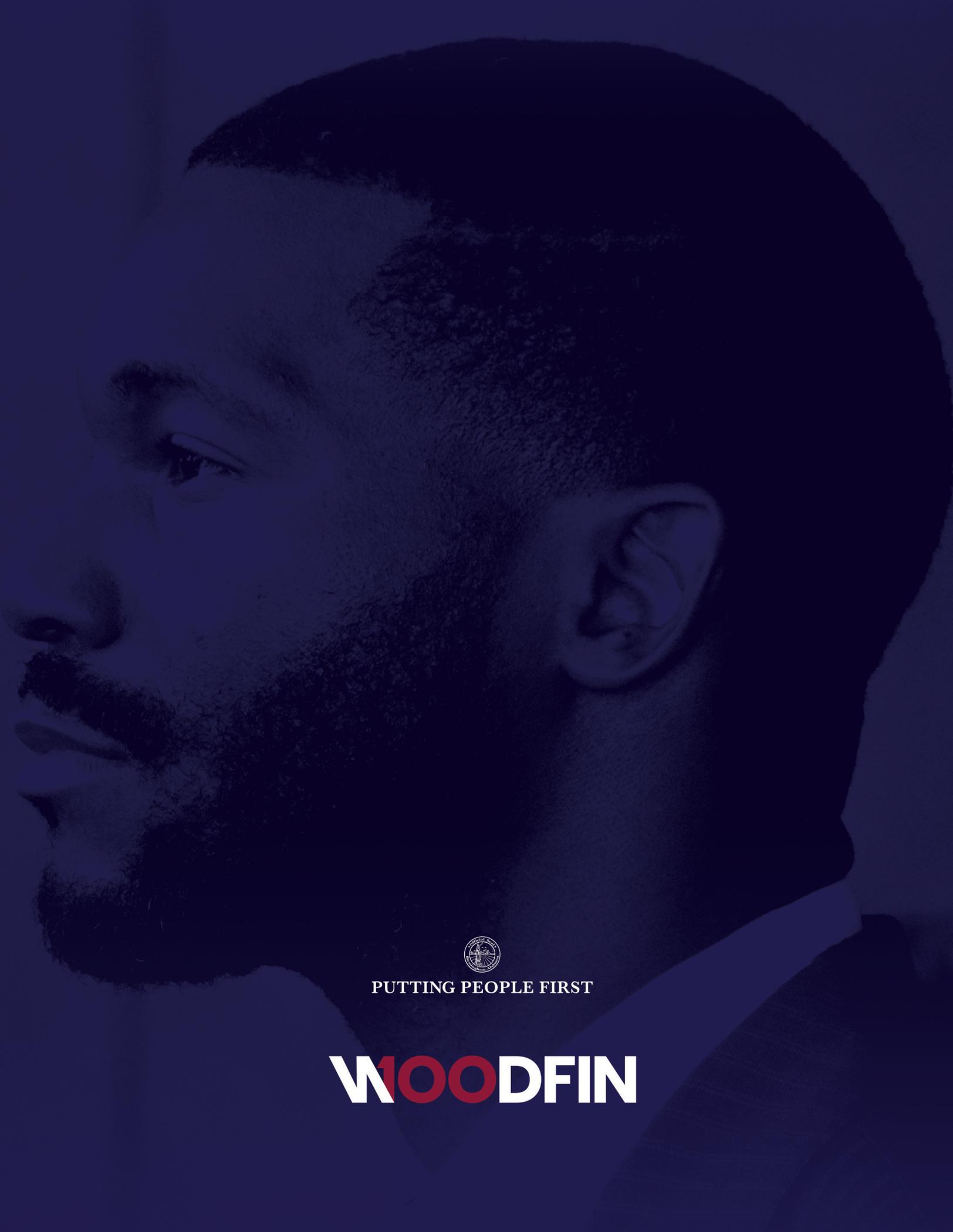
Subcommittee Leaders Support Team

Traci Bennett, Deputy Director, Mayor's Division of Youth Services
Alicia Lumpkin Whitfield, City of Birmingham Mayor's office Director of Process Improvement
Alicia Johnson-Williams, Director, Boutwell Auditorium
Monique Shorts, Manager of Partnerships and Entrepreneurship, Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity
Cory Stallworth, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Community Development

Mayor's Staff

Belinda Bertrand, Executive Administrator, City of Birmingham Mayor's Office
Sylvia Bowen, Director of Administrative Services, City of Birmingham Mayor's Office
Ed Fields, Senior Advisor & Chief Strategist, City of Birmingham Mayor's office
Jasmine Hollis, Administrative Assistant, Mayor's Office of Public Information
Chanda Temple, Senior Project Manager, City of Birmingham Mayor's office
Marcus Watts, Senior Graphic Designer, City of Birmingham

We also extend sincere thanks to volunteer leaders, residents, city employees, and key partners that contributed to this report and event.



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